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Message Text

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FOLLOWING MESSAGE SENT PARIS DATED L6 JUNE L978 FROM
NICE RPTD FOR YOUR ACTION/INFO:

QUOTE:
NICE 262

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PINS, FR
SUBJECT: THE PRESIDENT OF FRANCE VISITS CORSICA

REF: NICE 120, NICE A-3, L/26/78, NICE A-22, 8/18/77

TEXT
SUMMARY: THE RECENT VISIT OF PRESIDENT VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING TO CORSICA PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASSESS CENTRAL GOVERNMENT PLANS FOR CORSICA AND HOW VGE'S VISIT FITS IN THESE PLANS. THE FACT THAT HE WAS IN CORSICA NEARLY THREE DAYS POINTS OUT THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHES TO DE-EMPHASIZING REGIONALISM AND PROVIDING
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POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES NECESSARY TO BRING CORSICA CLOSER TO THE MAINLAND. THE VISIT FOLLOWS LOGICALLY FROM THE DECISION IN 1975 TO MAKE TWO DEPARTMENTS AND ONE REGION OF CORSICA. AL-THOUGH MAKING CORSICA A SEPARATE REGION, THE DECISION, IN FACT, DE-EMPHASIZES REGIONALISM AND ALLOWED THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT TO RE-ESTABLISH ADMINISTRATIVE

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CONTROL IN HAUTE CORSE. PREVIOUSLY DIRECTED BY A SOUS-PREFET IT APPARENTLY RECEIVED LITTLE ATTENTION FROM THE PREFET'S OFFICE IN AJACCIO AND WAS ALLOWED TO OPERATE WITH A MINIMUM OF ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL. GISCARD'S VISIT IN JUNE RE-AFFIRMED CENTRAL CONTROL AND PROMISED CLOSER TIES TO THE MAINLAND BY INCREASING COMMUNICATIONS (BOTH AIR AND SEA), IMPROV-ING THE ECONOMIC PICTURE AND TRADE WITH THE MAINLAND, AND REDUCING VIOLENCE. END SUMMARY.

CORSICA AS A REGION:
1. IN 1975 CORSICA WAS DIVIDED INTO TWO DEPARTMENTS AND DECLARED A REGION. THIS WAS MORE THAN A SIMPLE GESTURE TO CORSICAN NATIONALISTIC FEELINGS FOR SOME KIND OF RECOGNITION. FROM TALKS WITH THE YOUNG CORSICAN SOUS-PREFET WHO HAD THE JOB OF PREPARING HAUTE CORSE FOR ITS NEW STATUS AND THE PREFET OF THE DEPARTMENT, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE MAJOR REASON FOR THE CREATION OF THE NEW DEPARTMENT WAS TO GIVE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT A FIRMER GRIP ON THE DAY-TO-DAY AND LONG-TERM AFFAIRS. ACCORDING TO THE PREFET HIS MAJOR TASK ON TAKING OVER IN 1975 WAS TO REASSERT ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL OVER THE FUNCTIONS AND OPERATIONS IN THE AREA INCLUDING PROPER PROCEDURES FOR ROUTINE ADMINISTRATION OF LICENSE ISSUANCE, PAYMENT OF TAXES, ETC. AS WELL AS LONG-TERM PROJECTS. APPARENTLY THE POLICE HAD EVEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALLOWED MINOR CRIMINAL AFFAIRS TO BE SETTLED AMONG THE PARTIES WITHOUT POLICE INTERFERENCE. THIS IS STILL A MAJOR ON-GOING TASK FOR THE PREFET.

2. THE PREFET SAID THAT HIS SECOND MAJOR ACTIVITY IS ATTEMPTING TO CONTROL THE BOMBINGS. EVERYONE AGREES THERE ARE THREE REASONS FOR BOMBINGS (WHICH HAVE BEEN A PART OF CORSICAN LIFE FOR SOMETIME): VENGEANCE, JEALOUSY AND POLITICS. VENGEANCE AND JEALOUSY ARE GENERALLY CREDITED WITH 70-75 PERCENT. POLITICS ACCOUNT FOR THE REST AND SOME BELIEVE THAT POLITICAL REASONS ARE GIVEN FOR BOMBINGS WHICH ARE REALLY MOTIVATED BY JEALOUSY AND/OR VENGEANCE. THE PREFET SAID THAT MOST MEMBERS OF THE FRONT DE LIBERATION NATIONALE CORSE (FLNC) ARE KNOWN BUT UNTIL THEY ARE CAUGHT IN THE ACT CANNOT BE ARRESTED AND THAT CORSICANS, WHILE FED UP WITH THE BOMBERS, ARE NOT INFORMERS. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE ANTI-INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT FRANCIA, HE SAID, IN A MOMENT OF CANDIDNESS, THAT HE FEARS THAT SOME OF HIS POLICE ARE INVOLVED. HE ADDED THAT IF A BOMBING, EITHER BY THE FLNC OR FRANCIA, RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF A CORSICAN THERE

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WOULD BE SERIOUS TROUBLE AS THE FAMILIES INVOLVED
WOULD DEMAND VENGEANCE. BOTH HE AND OTHERS STATED

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THAT BOMBINGS ARE CAREFULLY STAGED TO AVOID DEATHS
AND INJURIES, ESPECIALLY TO CORSICANS. PREFECTURAL
OFFICIALS WERE NERVOUS ABOUT SECURITY FOR THE PRESIDENT
AS JUNE IS THE BEGINNING OF THE TOURIST SEASON AND
THERE WERE MANY ITALIANS AND GERMANS IN CORSICA.
SPECIAL GENDARME UNITS WERE BROUGHT IN FROM OUTSIDE
OF CORSICA AND CONTROL POINTS WERE SET UP AT VARIOUS
PLACES IN THE ISLAND TO CHECK AUTOMOBILE TRAFFIC.

REGIONALISM DE-EMPHASIZED:
3. IN TALKS WITH PREFECTURAL OFFICIALS IN CORSICA,
ALPES DE HAUTE PROVINCE AND THE ALPES MARITIMES ON
DECENTRALIZATION THE INVARIABLE RESPONSE IS THAT THE
PRESIDENT HAS DECIDED THAT DECENTRALIZATION ON A
REGIONAL LEVEL WILL BE DE-EMPHASIZED AND ANY DECENTRAL-
IZATION WILL BE DONE AT THE DEPARTMENT LEVEL. THE
REASON FOR THIS IS THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS MADE CLEAR
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THAT HE FEARS THAT DECENTRALIZATION ON THE REGIONAL LEVEL WILL ONLY SERVE TO SUPPORT OR ENCOURAGE AUTONOMIST MOVEMENTS IN SUCH PLACES AS CORSICA AND BRITTANY. THE SIMILARITY OF THE RESPONSES MAKES IT APPEAR THAT THE ORDER HAS COME DOWN IN WRITTEN FORM. THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO CORSICA IN JUNE WAS NOT BILLED AS A VISIT TO A REGION AND ALTHOUGH HE USED THE TERM "CORSICAN PEOPLE" FOR THE FIRST TIME (A FAVORITE OF THE AUTONOMISTS) IT WAS IN THE CONTEXT OF A POLITICAL REAFFIRMATION THAT CORSICA IS A PART OF FRANCE.

4. THE PRESIDENT CAME TO CORSICA IN THE BEST SEASON. THE RAINS HAD JUST STOPPED AND EVERYTHING WAS GREEN, THE SUN WAS OUT AND THERE IS STILL A GOOD DEAL OF WATER IN THE RIVERS. IN HIS SPEECHES, THE PRESIDENT DWELLED ON THE FRENCH ATTACHMENT TO CORSICA AND DOWNPLAYED THE DIFFERENCES. THE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM HE SPELLED OUT FOR CORSICA REFLECTS THIS. WITH HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT CORSICA NEEDS INDUSTRY, THIS MEANS AN IMPROVED POLITICAL CLIMATE; I.E., NO BOMBINGS, PLUS BETTER COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE MAINLAND. THE PRESIDENT CONDEMNED BOMBINGS, PROMISED BETTER AND MORE FREQUENT AIR AND SEA LINKS AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE ROADS, HELP IN RESTRUCTURING LOCAL AGRICULTURE AND LOCAL BUSINESS. HE HAS ALSO IN EFFECT PROMISED THE CORSICANS THAT THEY WOULD NOT BECOME SOME SORT OF GREAT "BRONZAGE" FACTORY FOR THE HORDES OF TOURISTS SEEKING BEACHES AND SUN.

5. FROM TALKS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS, PREFECTURAL OFFICIALS AND JUST PLAIN CORSICANS IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT MOST CORSICANS WANT HELP WITH TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND DO NOT WANT BOMBING OR AUTONOMY. MANY ARE SIMPLY NOT INTERESTED BUT WISH TO GO ABOUT THEIR

AFFAIRS AND HAVE INCREASED ACCESS TO MARKETS ON THE MAINLAND. THE PRESIDENT IS CERTAINLY AWARE OF THIS AS WELL AS RECENT WEAKNESS IN THE AUTONOMY MOVEMENT (SEE BELOW). FROM REMARKS DROPPED BY SOME OFFICIALS HIS VISIT WAS DESIGNED TO UNDERCUT ANY GLAMOR ATTACHED TO AUTONOMIST AND INDEPENDENT MOVEMENTS AND TO WOO AWAY SOME MEMBERS OF THE LEFT. LEFTIST MANIFESTATIONS DURING THE VISIT WERE LARGELY IGNORED BY THE POPULATION AND MOSTLY SERVED TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR WEAKNESS.

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COMPARING VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING AND CHIRAC'S VISITS:
6. ON A PRACTICAL POLITICAL LEVEL THE VISIT BLUNTED SOMEWHAT CHIRAC'S SUCCESSFUL VISIT IN EARLY MAY, FOLLOWING THE ELECTION OF FOUR FAULLIST DEPUTIES FROM CORSICA. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE MARCH ELECTION RESULTS BROUGHT JOY TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING VGE AND CHIRAC, BECAUSE IT WAS DEFINITELY A SIGN OF DISSATISFACTION WITH THE AUTONOMIST/INDEPENDENT MOVEMENTS. CHIRAC TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THIS MANDATE TO BREAK A LONG TIME TABOO AND USE THE TERM "CORSICAN PEOPLE" WHILE AT THE SAME TIME EMPHASIZING THAT CORSICANS ARE FRENCH. VGE IS QUOTED AS HAVING USED THE SAME TERM DURING HIS VISIT WHILE BEING CAREFUL TO SAY THAT THE "CORSICAN PEOPLE" ARE FRENCH. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO SPEND THREE DAYS VISITING MANY OF THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES IN CORSICA BROUGHT HIM A GREAT DEAL OF POPULARITY ON THE ISLAND AND A GOOD DEAL MORE PRESS COVERAGE THAN VISITS TO OTHER PARTS OF FRANCE MAY HAVE DONE. IF HE DECIDED THAT THE TIME WAS RIGHT FOR MAKING SOME SORT OF GESTURE TO THE VARIOUS FEELINGS OF NATIONALISM WITHIN FRANCE CORSICA WAS CLEARLY THE BEST CHOICE AS HE COULD COUNT ON A WARM LOCAL RECEPTION. THE IMAGE WAS OF LIMITED ACCEPTANCE OF DIFFERENCES WITHIN A UNITED

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FRANCE.

WILL VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING CARRY OUT HIS PROMISES?
7. WHAT IS THE PROBABLE OUTCOME OF ALL THIS PRESIDENT-
IAL ACTIVITY IN CORSICA? DESPITE SOME CYNICISM TOWARD
THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT, IT IS CLEAR THAT
IT IS IN THE PRESIDENT'S INTEREST TO COMMIT THE POLITI-
CAL AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES NECESSARY TO ALLEVIATE
SOME OF THE CONDITIONS IN CORSICA. TIES (POLITICAL,
COMMUNICATIONS, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC) WITH THE MAINLAND
MUST BE STRENGTHENED IN ORDER TO KEEP CORSICA AND
CORSICANS FRENCH. IF THESE LINKS WEAKEN IT CAN ONLY
LEAD TO THE ISOLATION OF CORSICA AND ASSIST THE AUTON-
OMIST AND INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS.

8. THE SEPARATISTS, OF WHATEVER NAME, ARE CURRENTLY IN
SOME DISARRAY. THE RECENT ARREST OF SEVERAL MEMBERS OF
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THE FLNC WAS CERTAINLY A COUP, BUT NO ONE IS CLAIMING
THE BOMBINGS WILL STOP OR EVEN THAT THE POLICE HAVE
DISMANTLED A MAJOR PART OF THE FLNC TERRORIST OPERATION.
WE CAN EXPECT A GREAT DEAL OF PRESSURE ON THE POLICE TO
CATCH MORE BOMBERS. RUMORS ARE GOING AROUND IN
CORSICA OF A NEW INDEPENDENCE GROUP, "MOVUMENTU PE A
LIBERAZIONE DI A CORSICA (MPLC). THIS GROUP IS
SUPPOSED TO HAVE SPLIT OFF FROM THE FLNC.

9. THE AUTONOMY MOVEMENT (AS OPPOSED TO THOSE SEEKING
INDEPENDENCE) IS APPARENTLY AT A LOW POINT. FROM TALKS
WITH SEVERAL CORSICANS WHO KNOW EDMOND SIMEONI, LEADER
OF THE UNIONE DI U POPULU CORSU (UPC), IT IS CLEAR
THAT HE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO CAPITALIZE ON THE POPULAR
SUPPORT HE HAD FOLLOWING HIS ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT IN
L975 AND THE FURIANI MANIFESTATION IN AUGUST 1977 (SEE
NICE A-22, 8/18/77). EVERYONE AGREES THAT EDMOND
SIMEONI IS NOT AN ORGANIZER BUT AN IDEALIST AND
DREAMER AND THAT HE HAS DISSIPATED HIS INFLUENCE AND
SUPPORT. REPORTS INDICATE THAT EDMOND SIMEONI IS
DEPRESSED AND NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE

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AUTONOMY MOVEMENT; OTHERS ASSOCIATED WITH IT ARE ALSO PESSIMISTIC. APPARENTLY WHAT IS NEEDED IS A HARD-HEADED ORGANIZER BUT THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE ONE AVAILABLE AND SIMEONI'S DOMINATION OF THE UPC MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR ANYONE TO EASE HIM OUT.

10. PREFECTURAL OFFICIALS EXPRESSED SOME WORRY IN THAT CORSICANS CONCERNED ABOUT THE LOSS OF CORSICAN CULTURE WILL BE DRIVEN TO THE FLNC WITHOUT A VIABLE UPC. (SIMEONI AND THE UPC HAVE REJECTED VIOLENCE WHERE-AS THE FLNC HAS NOT). WITH THE UPC IN A MORIBUND STATE, VGE'S VISIT AND A SUBSEQUENT AGGRESSIVE PROGRAM
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TO CARRY OUT HIS PROMISES COULD DRAW AWAY SOME AUTONO-MISTS, ISOLATING THE FLNC EVEN MORE. THERE IS WITHIN THE FLNC A TENDENCY FOR A KIND OF CULTURAL CHAUVINISM. A NEW TERM HAS CREPT INTO THEIR VOCABULARY, "CORSITUDE", WHICH IS UNCLEARLY DEFINED BUT SEEMS TO BE A KIND OF MYSTICAL IMITATION OF LEOPOLD SENGHOR AND AIME CESAIRE'S CONCEPT OF "NEGRITUDE". THE DANGER IS THAT "CORSITUDE" WILL LEAD TO A REJECTION OF FRENCH CULTURE IN PREFERENCE FOR CORSICAN LANGUAGE, MUSIC AND ART. SUCH A MOVEMENT WOULD ONLY INVOLVE SMALL NUMBERS BUT WOULD REINFORCE SEPARATISTS. LOCAL OFFICIALS BELIEVE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT MUST OFFER SOMETHING FOR THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO DO NOT WISH TO SEE TRADITIONAL

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CULTURE SUBMERGED, AND TO INCLUDE IT IN FRENCH
CULTURAL LIFE. THE UNIVERSITY PROPOSED FOR CORSICA,
WHILE PERHAPS NOT ECONOMICALLY SOUND, MAY BE POLITIC-
ALLY SOUND FOR THIS REASON AS IT WOULD PROVIDE
A CENTER FOR CORSICAN CULTURE, CONTROLLED BY THE ADMIN-
ISTRATION AND NOT LEAVE THE FIELD TO THE AUTONOMY AND
INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS.

11. RECENT NEWSPAPER ARTICLES HAVE INDICATED THAT
TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
VIS-A-VIS IMPROVEMENTS FOR CORSICA. THE CONSULATE'S
IMPRESSION IS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION CAN COUNT
ON STRONG FRENCH SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT FROM CORSICANS
AND THAT TIME IS NOT THAT CRITICAL. THIS IS NOT TO
SAY THAT NOTHING NEED BE DONE. HONEST EFFORTS AND
RESULTS BY THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE NECESSARY BUT THE
CULTURAL AND ECONOMICAL GROWING PAINS THAT CORSICA
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IS GOING THROUGH WILL PROVIDE ENOUGH DISCONTENT TO
KEEP BOMBINGS A FACT OF LIFE. PROVIDING A STABLE
POLITICAL CLIMATE IS A NECESSITY, HOWEVER, TO IMPROVE
THE CORSICAN ECONOMY AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE TO
PLAN ITS MOVES WELL. IT MUST BE ABLE TO OFFER PROTEC-
TION TO NEW INDUSTRY BUT CANNOT BECOME REPRESSIVE.
IT WILL HAVE TO MOVE CAREFULLY ON THIS FRONT WHILE
SHOWING A WILLINGNESS TO MOVE FASTER TO IMPROVE LOCAL
AGRICULTURE, BUSINESS AND LINKS WITH THE CONTINENT.
THE CORSICANS HAVE A GREAT SENSE OF WRY HUMOUR AND
THEY ARE AWARE OF THEIR LIMITATIONS AND FAULTS. A
CONSISTENT EFFORT TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS IN CORSICA
WILL CERTAINLY BE MET WITH APPRECIATION AND SUPPORT
BY THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION. EDENSWORD
UNQUOTE
HARTMAN

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